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Absurd Proposal

Soviet Russia came forth this week with one of the most absurd suggestions imaginable.

Premier Bulganin called upon the United States to join Russia in a project to aid Egypt.

Of course, the plan was emphatically rejected.

Obviously, the Communist premier had no real hope his proposal would be accepted. The move was calculated to help the Soviet cause in a propaganda way.

The Kremlin should have taken a cue from a statement Oct. 31 by Henry Cabot Lodge, U.S. representative to the United Nations that any such move was doomed.

At that time, Lodge said it takes "more than one question, important though it is, to upset relations between the United States, Britain and France." The U.N. member had reference to the Franco-British intervention in the Middle East.

People in the free world have done much soul-searching as a result of this action by Britain and France. As important as it is that the Suez Canal be put on a proper basis of management, there is sincere opposition in both the United States and Britain to current military operations by the Western allies.

Americans generally cannot compromise their own principles to the extent of sanctioning the Franco-British move. Yet, as the Eisenhower administration has said, the alternative—joining Russia in an intervention move—is unthinkable.

The postwar history of the Western Alliance bears Mr. Lodge out. Secretary of State Dulles walked out of the Geneva conference that eventually ended the 7½-year war. Undersecretary Walter Bedell Smith remained to head the U.S. delegation.

Dulles and Eden (then foreign secretary) were quarreling openly over the timing of the Southeast Asian security arrangement. At one point, British Prime Minister Churchill and Eden flew over here to patch up Anglo-American differences. Dulles was opposing, too, the French willingness to accept partition in Indochina as the price of peace. But when the partition peace settlement was made the United States went along, however, grudgingly.

Virtually the same thing happened later in 1954 with the European army project. Dulles had threatened "agonizing reappraisal" of the U.S. foreign policy if the French refused to participate.

The French National Assembly, after three years of foot-dragging, finally killed the European Defense Community plan on Aug. 30, 1954. On the following day, Dulles repeated that the United States would have to reappraise its security policies. But despite the EDC "tragedy," Dulles emphasized that the United States would continue to consult the allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and would not act alone.

Since the end of World War II, the United States has differed with the Western allies on other major issues. We have been much more hostile to Red China than has Great Britain, particularly on U.N. membership and on the status of Formosa. We have tolerated French policies in North Africa very grudgingly. We have sided now with, now against Italy on Trieste.

But the fact that the United States has participated in an alliance at all can be explained only by the corollary fact of our postwar role of world leadership. In World War I, the United States was an "associated" rather than an "allied" power, and President Wilson was always careful to draw that distinction.

It was the temper of isolationism in this country that kept the United States out of the League of Nations, Wilson's personal project. In the early days of World War II, an informal alliance with Great Britain did develop. But not until the declaration by the United Nations, did this country enter an outright military alliance.

While the conduct of Britain and France fails to measure up to our standards of international citizenship, it is far more acceptable than that of Soviet Russia.